

12-1-2007

# The Influence of Adolescents' Educational Aspirations and Religiosity on the Desire to Marry Among High School Seniors

Erica Scott

*Western Kentucky University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses>



Part of the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Scott, Erica, "The Influence of Adolescents' Educational Aspirations and Religiosity on the Desire to Marry Among High School Seniors" (2007). *Masters Theses & Specialist Projects*. Paper 375.  
<http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/375>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact [connie.foster@wku.edu](mailto:connie.foster@wku.edu).

THE INFLUENCE OF ADOLESCENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND  
RELIGIOSITY ON THE DESIRE TO MARRY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL  
SENIORS

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of Sociology  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Sociology

By  
Erica Burnett Scott

December 2007

THE INFLUENCE OF ADOLESCENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND  
RELIGIOSITY ON THE DESIRE TO MARRY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL  
SENIORS

Date Recommended Nov 26, 2007

Hollis  
Director of Thesis

Danny C. Knell

Douglas Clayton Smith

Gayle

Richard S. Bo 12/14/2007  
Dean, Graduate Studies December 2007

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
Education.....	4
Religion.....	7
CHAPTER III SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY.....	10
CHAPTER IV RESEARCH METHODS.....	16
Research Measures.....	17
Dependent Variables.....	18
Independent Variables.....	18
Control Variables.....	19
Analysis Plan.....	23
CHAPTER V RESULTS.....	25
CHAPTER VI DISCUSSION.....	37
APPENDIX A CORRELATIONS FOR INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES.....	41
REFERENCES.....	42



## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Desire to Marry (DV) Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs), Controlling for Several Different Factors (n=1132).....	26
2. Desire to Marry (DV) Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs), Controlling for Several Different Factors (n=1132).....	28
3. Desire to Marry (DV) Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs), Controlling for Several Different Factors (n=1132).....	30
4. Interaction Terms for Desire to Marry (DV) Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs), Controlling for Several Different Factors (n= 1132).....	32
5. Interaction Terms for Desire to Marry (DV) Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs), Controlling for Several Different Factors (n= 1132).....	33
6. Interaction Terms for Desire to Marry (DV) Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs), Controlling for Several Different Factors (n= 1132).....	34

THE INFLUENCE OF ADOLESCENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND  
RELIGIOSITY ON THE DESIRE TO MARRY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL  
SENIORS

Erica Burnett Scott

December 2007

47 Pages

Directed by: Drs. Holli Drummond, Jerry Daday, Douglas  
Smith, and Amy Krull

Department of Sociology

Western Kentucky University

**ABSTRACT**

The present study uses data from the 2004 Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF) to evaluate how twelfth grader's educational aspirations and religiosity influenced their desire to marry. Previous research indicates that education attained and increased religiosity increases the probability of marriage (Bumpass, Sweet, and Cherlin 1991; Goldstein and Kenney 2001; Sweeney 2002; Thornton, Axinn, and Teachman 1995). Exchange theory explains that higher levels of education increase one's odds in the marriage market, and the actual act of marriage is perceived as a "reward" to highly religious individuals (Becker 1973; Blau 1964; Edwards 1969; Friedman and Hechter 1988; Homans 1974). Results from this research indicate that as the

level of educational aspirations increase so does the odds of desiring marriage. In addition, increased religiosity significantly increases the odds of desiring marriage. Furthermore, religiosity does not moderate the relationship between educational aspirations and the desire to marry.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

No single event marks the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Marini 1978). The metamorphosis into adulthood is a process consisting of several transitions that include high school graduation, higher education, employment, marriage, parenthood, and/or leaving the parental home (Bozick and DeLuca 2005; Crockett and Bingham 2000; Hogan and Astone 1986; Panel on Youth: 1974). As many high school seniors prepare for graduation, decisions regarding other future personal transitions are forthcoming. Though students are confronted with many challenges, marriage and postsecondary education are the two primary concerns for this study.

For many seniors the societal pressure and importance of earning a college education is prominent. Studies indicate that college graduates earn more income, have more autonomy in their careers, and have access to more resources than individuals with less education (Kane and Rouse 1995; Smart and Pascarella 1986; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2005). Because college graduates reap many

benefits, the fact that college enrollment is increasing is not surprising. In 1960 high school graduates enrolled in a technical school, a two-year college, or a four-year college accounted for 45 percent. In 2003 that figure had increased to 64 percent of high school seniors enrolled in some form of higher education (U.S. Department of Education). These data suggest that postsecondary education is likely to be on the forefront of many seniors' plans.

This phenomenon of continuing education dramatically affects the marital patterns and marital aspirations for high school seniors. Prior research indicates that couples delay marriage to complete their educations (Crockett and Bingham 2000; Goldstein and Kenney 2001; Marini 1978; Sweeney 2002; Thornton and Freedom 1982). In Crockett and Bingham's (2000) study, young females expect to be married by the age of 23, and males expect to be married by the age of 24. However, females aspiring for a college education are likely to delay marriage until they reach 25 years of age and males are likely to postpone marriage until they are 26 years of age (Crockett and Bingham 2000). While prior research has examined the relationship between educational attainment and age at marriage, the current research evaluates how the combined effects of educational

aspiration and religiosity affect the desire to marry in twelfth-grade students.

Religiosity influences both education and marriage (Thornton 1985; Thornton, Axinn, and Hill 1992; Thornton and Camburn 1989; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995). Religiosity is the combination of the importance of religion in one's life and his or her participation in religious services (Thornton et al. 1992; Waite and Lehrer 2003). Research indicates that individuals with higher religiosity are more likely to marry. People with less religiosity are more likely to replace marriage and/or postpone marriage with cohabitation (Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Thornton et al. 1992). In addition, as religious participation increases, so does years of school completed (Hoge and Roozen 1979). Therefore, seniors who are highly religious may anticipate marriage instead of cohabitation, and they may have higher educational aspirations than their less religious counterparts.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following section elaborates on the transitional period in which twelfth-graders are challenged with many life-altering decisions. Furthermore, this chapter reviews previous research and identifies hypotheses regarding the impact of seniors' educational aspirations and religious participation/importance on the desire to marry.

#### **Education**

Research on transitions from adolescence to adulthood often focuses on educational attainment or educational aspiration's effects on marital age (Bayer 1969a; Bayer 1969b; Bulcroft and Bulcroft 1993; Crockett and Bingham 2000; Marini 1978; McLaughlin, Lichter, and Johnson 1993). Educational attainment is obtaining one's educational goals or completing a degree, whereas educational aspiration is the desire to complete a degree or further one's education (Bayer 1969a; Bayer 1969b; Bulcroft and Bulcroft 1993). Studies indicate that educational attainment, intelligence, and limited or no dating in high school increase the age at first marriage for either sex (Marini 1978). In addition,

female high schoolers who earn distinguished grades and have higher educational aspirations have an increased age at first marriage (Crocket and Bingham 2000). Although many variables influence changes in marital age, educational attainment profoundly affects timing of marriage for both males and females (Bayer 1969a; Goldstein and Kenney 2001; Marini 1978; Sweeney 2002).

Over the decades age at first marriage has increased (Qian and Preston 1993; Rogers and Thornton 1985; Sassler and Schoen 1999; Schoen and Weinick 1993; Thornton 1989; Thornton and Freedman 1982), and some delay in marriage can be attributed to couples waiting to complete their educations before marriage (Bayer 1969a; Goldstein and Kenney 2001; Marini 1978; Sweeney 2002). For instance, the median age of first-time brides in 1970 was 20.8 years compared with 25.1 years in 2000-2003. Grooms are now waiting until they are 26.7 years before they marry, compared with 23.2 for men in the 1970s (U.S. Bureau of...2000-2003; U.S. Bureau of...2001).

Besides the pursuit of education delaying marriage for both sexes, educational attainment increases the likelihood of marriage (Goldstein and Kenney 2001; Sweeney 2002). According to recent research conducted by Sweeney (2002), "having at least 16 years of schooling is associated with



52 percent greater odds ( $\exp[.42]$ ) of marriage than having 12 years of schooling" (p. 139). The trend has dramatically shifted since the 1940s; female college graduates were less likely to marry than high school graduates in this earlier time (Hajnal 1954). In other words, education influences both the timing and the odds of getting married.

Furthermore, educational attainment affects whether a couple decides to marry or cohabitate. Today more educated people are marrying and less educated are cohabitating (Bumpass, et al. 1991; Goldstein and Kenney 2001; Thornton, et al. 1995). According to Bumpass et al. (1991), high school dropouts are most likely to replace early marriage with cohabitation, and they are also more likely never to marry their live-in partner.

Although these studies provide valuable information concerning education's effects on marriage or cohabitation, they do not provide insight on adolescents' desire to marry. After an extensive literature review, only one study, in 1993, focused on desire to marry. This research, using a nationally representative sample of adults who ranged in age from 19 to 35, evaluated the differences between racial and ethnic groups on their desire to marry (South 1993). The results indicated that increased

educational attainment significantly predicted increases in marital desire for both men and women (South 1993).

Unlike South's previous research, this research evaluates educational aspirations as they predict desire to marry among twelfth grade students. Hypothesis 1 is based on research reviewed.

Hypothesis 1: Students who plan to pursue higher levels of advanced education (technical, 2-year, or 4-year college degrees) will have greater odds of desiring marriage.

### **Religion**

The institution of religion is tightly intertwined with marriage. Because America is a religious nation with most Americans believing in God (Myers 2000), belief systems are often woven into the fabric of the institution of family. Many people derive their beliefs about marriage from the institution of religion, and most Americans will marry at some point in their lives (Myers 2000; Waite and Lehrer 2003). Thus, social scientists are intrigued with the effects of religion on marriage.

Historically scholars have noted that religion is associated with many facets of family life: marriage, divorce, family size, and sexual attitudes (Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Thornton 1985; Thornton et al. 1992). For instance, increased religious participation and/or

importance are associated with an increased probability of marriage. Likewise, decreased religiosity is related to a greater likelihood of cohabitation (Brown and Gary 1991; Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Thornton et al. 1992). Therefore, increased rates of religiosity could be associated with the desire to marry.

Besides religion's influence on marriage, religious participation is positively associated with education (Hoge and Roozen 1979). Research, using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, found that religious participation positively affects students' educational expectations, time spent on homework, probability of obtaining a high school diploma, and advanced mathematics credits earned (Muller and Ellison 2001). Although Muller and Ellison found a relationship between religious participation and educational expectation or attainment, they did not explore how their combined effects influence adolescents' marital desire.

Evidence from prior research suggests that religion may moderate the relationship between education and desire to marry (Brown and Gary 1991; Hoge and Roozen 1979; Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Thornton et al. 1992). For instance, increased religiosity is associated with greater levels of educational attainment (Hoge and Roozen 1979).

Furthermore, greater religiosity is associated with marriage, and decreased religiosity is associated with cohabitation (Brown and Gary 1991; Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Thornton et al. 1992). Therefore, greater religiosity could possibly be associated with a greater desire to marry.

This research attempts to bridge the gap between the influence of education and religion on the desire to marry. This study will evaluate the independent effects of adolescents' educational aspirations on their desire to marry and religiosity's effects on their desire to marry. In addition, this research will examine the effects of educational aspirations and religiosity simultaneously as well as examining their potential moderating effects. A moderating effect shows the odds of desiring marriage or not based on covariates held constant. For example, does religiosity affect individuals desiring a vocational degree differently than those who do not? The literature review suggests the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2: As religiosity increases, so will the odds of desiring marriage.

Hypothesis 3: Religiosity acts as a moderator between levels of educational aspiration and desire to marry, explaining for whom education predicts desire to marry.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY**

According to the fairy tales, fate brings men and women together. They are drawn together by some supernatural, magnetic force. In reality the selection process for marriage is extremely complex. There are simply not enough tall, dark, and handsome prince-charmings to provide every woman one, and some women have different characteristics and preferences when choosing a mate. Exchange theorists believe that all human beings have preferences or values (Friedman and Hechter 1988; Ritzer and Goodman 2004) that they look for in the opposite sex. The majority of men, prefer a spouse who tends to be physically attractive, while women place more importance on men's economic success (Schoen and Wooldredge 1989; Schoen, Wooldredge, and Thomas 1989; Schoen and Weinick 1993).

These values guide men and women's goal-oriented and purposive behavior. People's decision to marry and whom they will marry is calculated (Edwards 1969; Becker 1973; Friedman and Hechter 1988), and individuals choose marriage if they will reap more rewards with a spouse than they

would on their own (Edwards 1969; Becker 1973). The rewards from a spouse could be either intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic rewards consist of love, affection and respect; and extrinsic rewards are labor and money (Blau 1964). People try to maximize their rewards while reducing their costs. Costs could consist of time, money, and energy given to another person (Blau 1964; Homans 1974).

This unconscious process of evaluating rewards and costs occurs simultaneously between men and women. For instance, Chad may choose to go on a first date with Amy because she is physically attractive, and Amy may accompany Chad because he is an industrial engineer. Both are maximizing their rewards by going on a date with someone who meets their preferences. To spend time on a date with each other is to forgo a date with someone else, and in doing so a certain cost is incurred for both Amy and Chad (Edwards 1969). Notice that the dating process is reciprocal, and both parties have to decide that they have something to gain by sharing their time with the other person.

Beyond maximizing their rewards, Amy and Chad have to take into account the other people who are competing for a

marriage partner. Becker (1973) explains the dating process as a competition between scarce resources:

since men and women compete—as they seek mates, a market in marriages can be presumed to exist. Each person tries to find the best mate, subject to the restrictions imposed by the market conditions (p. 814).

Unlike the fairy tales, people are looking for the most nearly perfect mate in an imperfect world. A person's ideal mate may not exist in the marriage market, or his or her ideal spouse may not be interested in pursuing a relationship with that person (Becker 1974, Edwards 1969, South 1991). Therefore, people competing in the marriage market have to take into account the preferences they value in a mate, the availability of that kind of mate, and the probability of marrying that kind of spouse (Becker 1974; Edwards 1969; Homans 1974; South 1991).

In addition, the marriage market can be even more challenging for people with less than desirable traits who want to "marry up" because they are unable to find a mate who is willing to "marry down" (Edwards 1969). In fact, research shows strong tendencies toward homogamy in the following mate selection characteristics: age (Atkinson and Glass 1985; Becker 1974; South 1991; Vera, Berardo, and Berardo 1985), race and ethnicity (Labov and Jacobs 1986; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1990) religion, (Glenn 1982,

Thornton et al. 1992) education, (Rockwell 1976, Schoen and Wooldredge 1989) and occupational status (Morgan 1981). In other words, people have higher odds of marrying someone who is similar or "equal" to them regarding age, race, religion, education, and occupational status. If all of the characteristics are not equal the totality of characteristics tends to balance one another (Becker 1974; Edwards 1969; South 1991). Edwards (1969) gives an example of the equalization process:

Individuals with socioeconomic resources are less willing to marry individuals with comparatively undesirable or non-normative characteristics, since their resources provide them with greater bargaining power and enhance their own attractiveness in possible exchanges. Individuals with similar socioeconomic backgrounds tend to marry each other partly because they reject those with fewer resources (p. 929).

To increase their bargaining power in the marriage market, men and women continue their educations. Research shows that each year of school accumulation increases the monthly odds of marriage by 45 percent for men and 27 percent for women (Thornton et al. 1995). This statistic is not surprising given that school accretion increases the possibilities for steady employment, which enhances the attractiveness of men and women (Becker 1974; Sewell and Hauser 1975; Thornton et al. 1995).



Besides increasing society's economic rewards by marrying someone with advanced education, there is also a reward in the actual act of marrying. Many religions place a high value on marriage, procreation, and family life, in that order (Thornton et al. 1992). People choose to conform because "they perceive it is to their net advantage to conform" (Homans 1967:60). This theory is supported by sound research that reveals greater religiosity is associated with marriage and decreased religiosity is associated with cohabitation (Brown and Gary 1991; Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Thornton et al. 1992). Moreover, religious individuals have negative sanctions to endure if they deviate from the norm or their expected behavior, whereas less religious people are not as encouraged to follow certain behaviors because the negative sanctions are not as important to them.

Based on previous research and the logic of exchange theory, high school seniors who aspire to attend a four-year college will probably have higher odds of wanting to marry than seniors who aspire to attend a two-year college. Higher education will make these individuals more attractive in the marriage market and give them more bargaining power (Becker 1975; Edwards 1969; Sewell and Hauser 1975; South 1991; Thornton et al. 1995). In

addition, twelfth graders who are highly religious will have greater odds of desiring marriage than their counterparts. Religious individuals are negatively sanctioned when they diverge from the norm, whereas less religious people are not as encouraged to abide by the same rules because they do not perceive the behavior to contribute as net advantage.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

Data from the Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF) were retrieved from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), and these data were used to test the hypotheses. Each year since 1975, MTF surveys are given to a nationally representative sample of high-school students. This sample of participants is obtained using a three-stage process. Selection of geographic area occurs in stage 1. Stage 2 consists of selecting schools, and each school will participate in the study for two years. Finally, students are randomly selected within these schools in stage 3. Although this study uses a full probability sampling, a few high school dropouts and students who are home schooled are not included in the sample. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of high-school-aged youth.

In the MTF Survey students are given a self-administered questionnaire during class hours. Respondents have approximately 45 minutes to complete their survey,

which measures a plethora of content areas: drugs, education, major social institutions, religion, race relations, social change, politics, concern for others, etc. Teachers stay in the classroom to ensure an orderly atmosphere, but they are discouraged from walking around the room. With teachers stationary, students may feel free to write their answers without fear of being observed (Johnston, Bachman, O'Malley, and Schulenberg 2004).

The present study will use the MTF data to evaluate high-school seniors in 2004. This sample was chosen because seniors are in a transitional period in which adult decisions regarding marriage, education, military service, and/or employment are forthcoming. In addition, seniors' expectations about future decisions should be more accurate than underclass men's and women's expectations (Crockett and Bingham 2000). Thus, a nationally representative sample of seniors (n=1132) was chosen over juniors, sophomores, or first year students.

### **Research Measures**

The following section explains how the dependent, independent, and control variables were measured for this research. This chapter concludes with the Analysis Plan, which describes the statistical analysis for this study.

### Dependent Variables

The dependent variable is "desire to marry." The question read, "Which do you think you are most likely to choose in the long run?" The response categories ranged from 0=not getting married or undecided about getting married and 1=getting married.

### Independent Variables

As mentioned earlier, two independent variables important in this study: educational aspirations and religiosity. First, three measures are used in three separate models to evaluate high school seniors' educational aspirations. These three measures were follow-up questions to, "How likely is it that you will do the following things after high school?" The three measures read, "Attend a technical or vocational school, graduate from a two-year college program, and graduate from college (four-year program)." Response categories for each question ranged along a four-point continuum (1= "Definitely won't," 2= "Probably won't," 3= "Probably will" and 4= "Definitely will").

Second, religiosity was measured by two concepts: importance and participation. The first question stated, "How often do you attend religious services?" The response categories ranged along a four-point continuum (1= "Never,"

2= "Rarely," 3= "Once or twice a month" and 4= "About once a week or more"). The second question read, "How important is religion in your life?" The response categories ranged along a four-point continuum (1= "Not important," 2= "A little important," 3= "Pretty important" and 4= "Very important"). These two variables were added to form a scale that ranged from 2-8, where higher scores indicated higher religiosity (Cronbach's Alpha .782).

#### Control Variables

Prior research has indicated that several variables influence marital age: father's education, mother's education, dating frequency, sex, intelligence, community type, and living in a single-parent home (Bulcroft and Bulcroft 1993; Crockett and Bingham 2000; Haller and Virkler 1993; Marini 1978; McLaughlin et al. 1993; South 1993). Because these variables influence marital age, the likelihood of them affecting desire to marry is possible. In addition, race was a significant factor influencing marriage (Bulcroft and Bulcroft 1993; South 1993), and self-esteem was found to influence dating frequency and marriage timing significantly (Klemer 1971). Therefore, all of the above variables were controlled.

Sex was measured with the following question: "What is your sex?" The dichotomous response categories consisted

of 0= "male" and 1= "female." Race was measured with the question "How do you describe yourself?" The nominal response categories were 0= "Caucasian" and 1= "Black."

To evaluate family structure, a variable was created that contrasted respondents who lived with two parents (coded 0) to those who lived in a single-parent home (coded 1). The question read "Which of the following people live in the same household with you? (Mark all that apply)" The respondent is supposed to indicate whether a "father (or male guardian)" lives with him or her and/or if a "mother (or female guardian) resides with him or her."

The educational level of parents was measured using two questions, which had a disclaimer attached to them. The disclaimer read "If you were raised mostly by foster parents, stepparents, or others, answer for them. For example, if you have both a stepfather and a natural father, answer for the one that was the most important in raising you." The first question stated "What is the highest level of schooling your father completed?" The second question read "What is the highest level of schooling your mother completed?" The response categories for both questions were 1= "Completed grade school or less," 2= "Some high school," 3= "Completed high school," 4= "Some college," 5= "Completed college," and 6= "Graduate

or professional school after college." Parental education was controlled because higher levels of parental education reduce the probability of young marriages, especially for women (Goldscheider and Waite 1986). Therefore, parental education could potentially influence twelfth graders' desire to marry.

The respondent's intelligence was measured because Marini (1978) discovered that increased intelligence increases marital age for either sex. The question stated "How intelligent do you think you are compared with others your age?" The response categories for these two questions were 1= "Far Below Average," 2= "Below Average," 3= "Slightly Below Average," 4= "Average," 5= "Slightly Above Average," 6= "Above Average," and 7= "Far Above Average."

Dating frequency was also controlled because previous research has shown that increased dating frequency in high school decreases age at first marriage for both males and females (Crocket and Bingham 2000). Dating frequency was measured using one question: "On average, how often do you go out with a date (or your spouse, if you are married)?" The response categories ranged from 1 to 6: 1= "Never," 2= "Once a month or less," 3= "2 or 3 times a month," 4= "Once a week," 5= "2 or 3 times a week," and 6= "Over 3 times a week."



Community type was measured by the question "Where did you grow up mostly?" The response categories were collapsed into a dichotomy to reflect the Census's classification of metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. The respondents lived in either a non-metropolitan= 0 (population less than 50,000 people) or metropolitan= 1 (population of 50,000 people or more) environment. Community type was controlled because "nonmetro women are 26% more likely to marry in a given year than their similarly-aged metro counterparts" (McLaughlin et al. 1993:833). Therefore, community type could influence a senior's desire to marry or desire for a mate.

The gender role variable was measured by the question "Imagine you are married and have no children. How would you feel about each of the following work arrangements? A: Husband works full-time, wife doesn't work." The response categories ranged from 1-4: 1= "Not at all acceptable," 2= "Somewhat acceptable," 3= "Acceptable," and 4= "Desirable." This variable was chosen because previous research indicates that people who agree with the traditional model of man as a breadwinner and woman as a homemaker should be more likely to marry (Sassler and Schoen 1999).

Self-esteem is a control variable because Klemmer (1971) found that young women with higher self-esteem dated

more often than women with low self-esteem, and women who dated more frequently also married at a younger age although this pattern was not significant for men. Self-esteem was measured by summing six questions. All six questions began with the following precursor: "How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?" The first question read "I take a positive attitude toward myself." The response categories for this question and the following five questions ranged 1 to 5: 1= "Disagree," 2= "Mostly Disagree," 3= "Neither," 4= "Mostly Agree," and 5= "Agree." The other five questions were as follows: "I feel I am a person of worth, on an equal plane with others." "I am able to do things as well as most other people." "I do not have much to be proud of." "I feel that I can't do anything right." "I feel that my life is not very useful." All six questions were coded so that a value of 4 indicated high self-esteem and a value of 1 indicated low self-esteem. The scale ranges from 8-40, where higher values indicate higher self-esteem (Cronbach's Alpha .91).

### **Analysis Plan**

Multivariate logistic regression was used to examine the data because the dependent variable is dichotomous with the two response categories of "yes" (coded as a 1 = desire to marry) and "no" (coded as a 0 = desire to not marry).

The results are displayed in three tables to illustrate how the three different levels of educational aspirations (vocational school, two-year school, and four-year school) influence the desire to marry. Participants could potentially desire one or more of the school categories. Therefore, three tables were created instead of comparing data in one table. Each table presents the log-odds of each independent variable, corresponding standard errors, and the multiplicative effect on the odds ( $\text{Exp}(B)$ ). The multiplicative effect on the odds in the regression models allows one to determine the influence of each independent variable on the odds of desiring to marry, holding other variables in the model constant.

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS

Table 1 presents the multivariate logistic regression model showing the relationship between aspiring to attend a vocational school, religiosity, and the desire to marry, while holding constant several other variables. High school students who stated that they attend church regularly and believe religion is important have significantly greater odds (15%) of expressing a desire to marry, while holding all other variables constant. However, the desire to attend a vocational school is associated with greater odds (22%) of not wishing to get married. These results suggest that stronger support of religion is associated with greater odds of marriage, but lower levels of aspired education, such as vocational schools, are associated with greater odds of not wishing to get married.

Besides these independent variables, several control variables are significantly associated with greater odds of expressing a desire to marry. These variables include living in urban areas (36%), living in a two-parent home

Table 1. Desire to Marry (DV) Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs), Controlling for Several Different Factors ( $n=1132$ ).

<i>Variable</i>	Marry	
	<i>b</i>	Exp (B)
Urban	.306* (.185)	1.357
Family Structure	.310* (.177)	1.364
Sex (male=0)	.690*** (.190)	1.993
Dad Education	.042 (.085)	1.043
Mom Education	.054 (.088)	1.055
Dating	.306*** (.059)	1.358
Intelligence	-.096 (.085)	.908
Race (white=0)	-.860*** (.256)	.423
Gender Roles	.111 (.101)	1.117
Self-esteem	.048*** (.013)	1.049
Religiosity	.138*** (.048)	1.148
<b>Vocational School</b>	-.202** (.091)	.817
Constant		-1.998
Pseudo Nagelkerke ( $R^2$ )		.156

\* $p<.10$ ; \*\* $p<.05$ ; \*\*\* $p<.01$

Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses.

(36%), being female (99%), higher levels of dating (36%), and higher levels of self-esteem (5%). In addition to the vocational school variable, racial/ethnic minorities had significantly greater odds (136%) of expressing a desire to not marry compared with whites.

Table 2 is also a multivariate logistic regression model, which displays the relationship between desiring a two-year college education, religiosity, and the desire to marry, while holding constant several other variables. Tables 1 and 2 reveal similar findings. For instance, data in both tables show that high school seniors who are more religious have significantly greater odds (15%) of desiring marriage. Also, the control variables associated with greater odds of desiring marriage in Table 1 are also significantly associated with greater odds for desiring marriage in Table 2. These control variables include living in an urban area (37%), living in a two-parent home (34%), being female (106%), frequently dating in high school (36%), and having a higher self-esteem (5%).

However, being a minority as opposed to being White greatly increased the odds (144%) of not desiring marriage. In addition, Table 2 indicates that seniors who desire to attend a two-year school have significantly greater odds (19%) of not wishing to marry. It is worth noting the

Table 2. Desire to Marry (DV) Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs), Controlling for Several Different Factors ( $n=1132$ ).

<i>Variable</i>	Marry	
	<i>b</i>	Exp (B)
Urban	.317* (.184)	1.373
Family Structure	.290* (.177)	1.337
Sex (male=0)	.723*** (.189)	2.061
Dad Education	.047 (.084)	1.048
Mom Education	.045 (.088)	1.046
Dating	.310*** (.059)	1.364
Intelligence	-.101 (.086)	.904
Race (white=0)	-.892*** (.254)	.410
Gender Roles	.096 (.101)	1.100
Self-esteem	.049*** (.013)	1.050
Religiosity	.139*** (.048)	1.149
<b>Two-Year School</b>	-.171** (.086)	.842
Constant		-1.955
Pseudo Nagelkerke ( $R^2$ )		.155

---

\* $p<.10$ ; \*\* $p<.05$ ; \*\*\* $p<.01$

Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses.

pattern emerging in Tables 1 and 2. As the level of educational aspiration increases from vocational school to a two-year school, the odds of desiring not to marry decreases from 22% to 19%. These results suggest that as the level of educational aspiration increases, the odds of desiring marriage increase.

Again, Table 3 is a multivariate logistic regression model showing the relationship between desiring a four-year education, religiosity, and the desire to marry while holding constant other variables. Similar to Tables 1 and 2, Table 3 shows the following control variables significantly leading to greater odds of desiring marriage: living in a two-parent home (41%), being female (96%), dating more frequently in high school (36%), and having a higher self-esteem (5%). However, being a minority as opposed to being White had significantly greater odds (143%) of not desiring marriage. Besides the control variables, all three tables suggest that high school seniors who are more religious have significantly greater odds (approximately 15%) of desiring marriage. Furthermore, aspiring to attend a four-year college is significantly associated with 28% greater odds of desiring marriage. Data in Tables 1-3 indicate that seniors who participate in religious activities and believe that



Table 3. Desire to Marry (DV) Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs), Controlling for Several Different Factors ( $n=1132$ ).

<i>Variable</i>	Marry	
	<i>b</i>	Exp (B)
Urban	.295 (.186)	1.343
Family Structure	.343* (.177)	1.409
Sex (male=0)	.672*** (.190)	1.959
Dad Education	.013 (.087)	1.013
Mom Education	.049 (.088)	1.051
Dating	.307*** (.059)	1.359
Intelligence	-.133 (.088)	.875
Race (white=0)	-.890*** (.253)	.411
Gender Roles	.118 (.101)	1.125
Self-esteem	.045*** (.013)	1.046
Religiosity	.128*** (.048)	1.137
<b>Four-Year School</b>	.247** (.105)	1.281
Constant		-2.777
Pseudo Nagelkerke( $R^2$ )		.157

\* $p<.10$ ; \*\* $p<.05$ ; \*\*\* $p<.01$

Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses.

religion is important have approximately 15% greater odds of desiring marriage. These results suggest that increased religiosity is associated with greater odds of desiring marriage. Beyond religion, data in all three tables suggest that as the level of educational aspiration increases, the odds of desiring marriage increases. This gradual, positive pattern is illustrated in Tables 1, 2, and 3. In Table 1, aspiring to attend a vocational school is significantly associated with greater odds (22%) of not desiring marriage. In Table 2, aspiring to attend a two-year school significantly increases the odds (19%) of not desiring marriage, and finally in Table 3, aspiring to attend a four-year college greatly increases the odds (28%) of desiring marriage.

In Tables 4-6, an interaction term is added to the models that were originally presented in Tables 1-3. The new variables capture the interaction effects between religiosity and level of education. As Table 4 shows, when the interaction term was added to the model for students seeking a vocational school education, the interaction is not significant and does not explain the odds desiring to marry (less than 1%). Moreover, the values for the multiplicative effect on the odds for religiosity and for

Table 4. Interaction Terms for Desire to Marry (DV)  
 Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs),  
 Controlling for Several Different Factors (n= 1132).

<i>Variable</i>	Marry	
	<i>b</i>	Exp (B)
Urban	.304 (.185)	1.355
Family Structure	.296* (.177)	1.345
Sex (male=0)	.692*** (.191)	1.997
Dad Education	.044 (.084)	1.045
Mom Education	.051 (.088)	1.052
Dating	.305*** (.059)	1.357
Intelligence	-.099 (.085)	.906
Race (white=0)	-.862*** (.085)	.422
Gender Roles	.038 (.041)	1.038
Self-esteem	.047*** (.013)	1.048
Religiosity	.142*** (.048)	1.153
Vocational	-.203** (.093)	.816
Interaction Term (Religiosity x Voc)	-.016 (.045)	.984
Constant		-1.649
Pseudo Nagelkerke (R <sup>2</sup> )		.156

\*p<.10; \*\*p<.05; \*\*\*p<.01

Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses.

Table 5. Interaction Terms for Desire to Marry (DV) Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs), Controlling for Several Different Factors (n= 1132).

<i>Variable</i>	Marry	
	<i>b</i>	Exp (B)
Urban	.314* (.184)	1.369
Family Structure	.287 (.177)	1.332
Sex (male=0)	.729*** (.190)	2.074
Dad Education	.047 (.084)	1.048
Mom Education	.042 (.088)	1.043
Dating	.313*** (.060)	1.367
Intelligence	-.103 (.086)	.902
Race (white=0)	-.885*** (.254)	.413
Gender Roles	.037 (.040)	1.038
Self-esteem	.048*** (.013)	1.049
Religiosity	.139*** (.048)	1.149
Two-Year	-.180** (.086)	.835
Interaction Term (Religiosity x Two-Year)	-.028 (.042)	.972
Constant		-1.686
Pseudo Nagelkerke (R <sup>2</sup> )		.156

\*p<.10; \*\*p<.05; \*\*\*p<.01

Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses.

Table 6. Interaction Terms for Desire to Marry (DV)  
 Regressed on Educational Aspirations and Religiosity (IVs),  
 Controlling for Several Different Factors (n= 1132).

<i>Variable</i>	Marry	
	<i>b</i>	Exp (B)
Urban	.296 (.186)	1.344
Family Structure	.327* (.177)	1.387
Sex (male=0)	.675*** (.192)	1.963
Dad Education	.016 (.087)	1.016
Mom Education	.047 (.088)	1.048
Dating	.307*** (.059)	1.359
Intelligence	-.134 (.089)	.875
Race (white=0)	-.894*** (.254)	.409
Gender Roles	.041 (.041)	1.041
Self-esteem	.045*** (.013)	1.046
Religiosity	.132** (.048)	1.141
Four-Year	.243** (.106)	1.275
Interaction Term (Religiosity x Four-Year)	.009 (.045)	1.009
Constant		-1.345
Pseudo Nagelkerke ( $R^2$ )		.157

\*p<.10; \*\*p<.05; \*\*\*p<.01

Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses.

vocational school in Table 4 are very similar to the values for the multiplicative effect on the odds for Table 1, which did not contain the interaction term. The results in Table 4 suggest that religion does not have a moderating effect between education and marriage.

In a similar way, when an interaction term was added to Table 5 for students who are aspiring to attend a two-year school, the interaction was not significant and does not explain the odds of not marrying. Moreover, when the interaction term was added to Table 5, the value for the multiplicative effect on the odds for religiosity are the same (1.149) as in Table 2 without the interaction term, and the values for the multiplicative effect on the odds for desiring a two-year college are very similar for both Tables 2 and 5. As in Table 4, the results in Table 5 indicate that religion does not have a moderating effect between aspiring to attend a two-year college and marriage.

Like Tables 4 and 5, Table 6 includes an interaction term. Again, in Table 6, the multiplicative effect on the odds for religiosity and desiring to attend four-year college, resemble the multiplicative effect on the odds for religiosity and desiring a four-year college in Table 3, which does not include the interaction term. Data in Table

6 suggest that religion does not moderate level of educational aspiration and desire to marry.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **DISCUSSION**

The present research attempted to evaluate how levels of educational aspiration and religiosity affect marital desire among twelfth-grade students. This study is the first to analyze levels of educational aspirations on the desire to marry, and this study contributes to previous research regarding youth transitions by evaluating seniors' aspirations.

Data from this research clearly supports Hypothesis 1. As levels of educational aspirations increase, so do the odds of desiring marriage. The data support similar findings that educational attainment positively influences marriage (Goldstein and Kenney 2001; South 1993; Sweeney 2002). Moreover, higher levels of education are associated with greater economic success (Sewell and Hauser 1975; Thornton et al. 1995), and exchange theorists would conclude that greater financial success makes individuals more attractive and gives them more bargaining power in the marriage market (Becker 1975; Edwards 1969; Sewell and Hauser 1975; South 1991; Thornton et al. 1995).



Hypothesis 2 was also supported because twelfth graders with increased religiosity had greater odds of desiring marriage. Exchange theorists believe that the act of marriage is a reward in itself for highly religious individuals, and conforming to the norms of the church is "rewarded" with positive sanctions (Friedman and Hecther 1988). In other words, highly religious people may choose to marry over cohabiting because there are positive sanctions associated with marriage and negative sanctions associated with living with someone before a lifelong commitment is established. Prior research also supports the framework of exchange theory and further reiterates this study's findings. Previous studies revealed that highly religious people choose marriage over cohabitation more frequently than do other individuals (Brown and Gary 1991; Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Thornton et al. 1992).

In addition, this research tested religiosity as a moderator between level of educational aspirations and desire to marry, and the results indicate that religiosity is not a moderator. After a more extensive literature search, studies reveal that the effects of religiosity on schooling may be biased because "estimated coefficients may overstate the positive causal effect of religious

involvement on educational outcomes" (Waite and Lehrer 2003: 260).

Although this research provided insight into the anticipated transitions of high school seniors, there were several limitations to the study. First, the use of secondary data restricted the research. Because some people are delaying or substituting marriage for cohabitation, a question regarding cohabitation would be helpful. However, the data set did not contain any questions concerning cohabitation.

The second limitation to the study is the emphasis on expectation. This study evaluated anticipated actions: expectation to marry and expectation of educational attainment. Actual behavior was not measured, and the third drawback of this study is the use of cross-sectional data instead of longitudinal. This research takes into account high school seniors' expectations at one point in time, and it is unfortunate that there is no follow-up data on these seniors. Therefore, causal order is questionable.

Future studies may want to evaluate seniors' desire to cohabitate. Because cohabitation is more socially accepted and practiced than before (Schoen and Owens 1992; Schoen and Weinick 1993), the decision to cohabit may be on the forefront of many high school graduates' plans. Beyond

cohabitation and marriage, researchers may want to evaluate educational aspirations and follow-up on graduates' actual behaviors later. Longitudinal data would give researchers a better understanding of the accuracy of seniors' aspirations in determining their future decisions.

# APPENDIX A

Table 7. Correlations for Independent and Dependent Variables

	Urban	Fam-struct	Gender	Daded	Momed	Dating	Intel	Race	Genrole	Self-Esteem	Rel	Two Year	Four Year	Voc	Marry
1	1.00														
2	-.065*	1.00													
3	.004	-.021	1.00												
4	.152**	.029	-.027	1.00											
5	.078**	-.011	-.058*	.493**	1.00										
6	-.050	.005	-.034	-.018	-.006	1.00									
7	.116**	.001	-.136**	.272**	.214**	-.022	1.00								
8	.125**	-.166**	.070*	-.143**	-.099**	-.115**	.030	1.00							
9	.090**	.024	.090*	.115**	.123**	-.035	.087**	-.138**	1.00						
10	.020	-.042	-.081**	.124**	.038	.116**	.264**	.069*	-.057	1.00					
11	-.012	.029	.113**	.051	.063*	.005	.071*	.184**	-.105**	.157**	1.00				
12	-.091**	-.029	.018	-.221**	-.181**	.050	-.246**	.087**	-.119**	-.066*	-.039	1.00			
13	.163**	-.061*	.081**	.342**	.246**	-.011	.351**	-.043	.096**	.186**	.142**	-.356**	1.00		
14	-.099**	.016	-.079**	-.189**	-.136**	-.019	-.172**	.112**	-.058	-.073*	-.051	.428**	-.478*	1.00	
15	.029	.063*	.099**	.070*	.048	.179**	.010	-.111**	-.030	.135**	.107**	-.077**	.122**	-.108**	1.00

P<.05\*; P<.01 \*\*

## REFERENCES

- Atkinson, Maxine P. and Becky L. Glass. 1985. "Marital Age Heterogamy and Homogamy, 1900 to 1980." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47:685-91.
- Bayer, Alan E. 1969a. "Marriage Plans and Educational Aspirations." *The American Journal of Sociology* 75(2):239-44.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1969b. "Life Plans and Marriage Age: An Application of Path Analysis." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 31(3):551-58.
- Becker, Gary S. 1973. "A Theory of Marriage: Part I." *Journal of Political Economy* 81(4):813-46.
- Becker, Gary S. 1974. "A Theory of Marriage: Part II." *Journal of Political Economy* 82(2):11-26.
- Blau, Peter. 1964. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, New York: Wiley.
- Bozick, Robert and Stefanie DeLuca. 2005. "Better Late Than Never? Delayed Enrollment in the High School to College Transition." *Social Forces* 84(1):527-50.
- Brown, Diane R. and Lawrence E. Gary. 1991. "Religious Socialization and Educational Attainment among African Americans: An Empirical Assessment." *The Journal of Negro Education* 60(3):411-26.
- Bulcroft, Richard A. and Kris A. Bulcroft. 1993. "Race Differences in Attitudinal and Motivational Factors in the Decision to Marry." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55(2):338-55.
- Bumpass Larry L., James A. Sweet, and Andrew Cherlin. 1991. "The Role of Cohabitation in Declining Rates of Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53(4):913-27.

- Crockett, Lisa J. and C. Raymond Bingham. 2000.  
 "Anticipating Adulthood: Expected Timing of Work and Family Transitions among Rural Youth." *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 10(2):151-72.
- Edwards, John N. 1969. "Familiar Behavior as Social Exchange." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 31:518-26.
- Friedman, Debra and Michael Hechter. 1988. "The Contribution of Rational Choice Theory to Macrosociological Research." *Sociological Theory* 6:201-18.
- Glenn, Norval D. 1982. "Interreligious Marriage in the United States: Patterns and Recent Trends." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 44:555-66.
- Goldscheider, Frances K. and Linda J. Waite. 1986. "Sex Differences in the Entry into Marriage." *The American Journal of Sociology* 92(1):91-109.
- Goldstein, Joshua R. and Catherine T. Kenney. 2001.  
 "Marriage Delayed or Marriage Forgone? New Cohort Forecasts of First Marriage for U.S. Women." *American Sociological Review* 66:506-19.
- Hajnal, John. 1954. "Differential Changes in Marriage Patterns." *American Sociological Review* 19(2):148-54.
- Haller, E. J. and S. J. Virkler 1993. "Another Look at Rural-Nonrural Differences in Students' Educational Aspirations." *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 9(3):170-78.
- Hogan, Dennis P. and Nan Marie Astone. 1986. "The Transition to Adulthood." *Annual Review of Sociology* 12:109-30.
- Hoge, Dean R. and David R. Roozen. 1979. "Research on Factors Influencing Church Commitment." Pp. 42-68 in *Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950-1978*, edited by R. Hoge and David Roozen. New York: Pilgrim.
- Homans, George C. 1967. *The Nature of Social Science*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

- Homans, George C. 1974. *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms*, rev. ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Johnston, Lloyd D., Jerald G. Bachman, Patrick M. O'Malley, and John E. Schulenberg. 2004. *Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth*. Ann Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan.
- Kane, Thomas J. and Cecilia Elena Rouse. 1995. "Labor-Market Returns to Two- and Four-Year Colleges." *The American Economic Review* 85(3):600-14.
- Klemer, Richard H. 1971. "Self-Esteem and College Dating Experience as Factors in Mate Selection and Marital Happiness: A Longitudinal Study." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 3(1):183-87.
- Labov, Teresa and Jerry A. Jacobs. 1986. "Intermarriage in Hawaii, 1950-1983." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 48:79-88.
- Marini, Margaret M. 1978. "The Transition to Adulthood: Sex Differences in Educational Attainment and Age at Marriage." *American Sociological Review* 43(4):483-507.
- McLaughlin, Diane K., Daniel T. Lichter, and Gail M. Johnston. 1993. "Some Women Marry Young: Transitions to First Marriage in Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Areas." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55(4):827-38.
- Morgan, Barrie S. 1981. "A Contribution to the Debate on Homogamy, Propinquity, and Segregation." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 43:909-21.
- Muller, Chandra and Christopher G. Ellison. 2001. "Religious Involvement, Social Capital, and Adolescents' Academic Progress: Evidence from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988." *Sociological Focus* 34(2):155-83.
- Myers, David G. 2000. *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee. 1974. *Youth: The Transition to Adulthood*. Chicago, IL: University Chicago Press.

- Qian, Z. and S. H. Preston. 1993. "Changes in American Marriage, 1972-1987: Availability and Forces of Attraction by Age and Education." *American Sociological Review* 58:482-95.
- Ritzer, George and Douglas J. Goodman. 2004. *Sociological Theory*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Rockwell, Richard C. 1976. "Historical Trends and Variations in Educational Homogamy." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 38:83-95.
- Rogers, Willard L. and Arland Thornton. 1985. "Changing Patterns of First Marriage in the United States." *Demography* 22(2):265-79.
- Sassler, Sharon and Robert Schoen. 1999. "The Effect of Attitudes and Economic Activity on Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61(1):147-59.
- Schoen, Robert and J. Wooldredge. 1989. "Marriage Choices in North Carolina and Virginia." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 51:465-81.
- Schoen, Robert, J. Wooldredge, and B. Thomas. 1989. "Ethnic and Educational Effects of Marriage Choice." *Social Science Quarterly* 70:617-30.
- Schoen, Robert and D. Owens. 1992. "A Further Look at First Marriages and First Unions." Pp. 109-17 in *The Changing American Family: Sociological and Demographic Perspectives*, edited by S.J. South and S.E. Tolnay. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Schoen, Robert and Robin M. Weinick. 1993 "Partner Choice in Marriages and Cohabitations." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 55:408-14.
- Sewell, William H. and Robert M. Hauser. 1975. *Education, Occupation and Earnings: Achievement in the Early Career*. New York: Academic.
- Smart, John and Ernest T. Pascarella. 1986 "Socioeconomic Achievements of Former College Students." *Journal of Higher Education* 57(5): 529-49.



- South, Scott J. 1991. "Sociodemographic Differentials in Mate Selection Preferences." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53(4):928-40.
- South, Scott J. 1993. "Racial and Ethnic Differences in the Desire to Marry." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55(2):357-70.
- Stolzenberg, Ross M., Mary Blair-Loy, and Linda J. Waite. 1995. "Religious Participation in Early Adulthood: Age and Family Life Cycle Effects on Church Membership." *American Sociological Review* 61(1):84-103.
- Sweeney, Megan M. 2002. "Two Decades of Family Change: The Shifting Economic Foundations of Marriage." *American Sociological Review* 67(1):132-47.
- Thornton, Arland. 1985. "Reciprocal Influences of Family and Religion in a Changing World." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47(2):381-94.
- Thornton, Arland. 1989. "Changing Attitudes toward Family Issues in the United States." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 51(4):873-93.
- Thornton, Arland and Donald Camburn. 1989. "Religious Participation and Adolescent Behavior and Attitudes." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 51(3):641-53.
- Thornton, Arland and Deborah Freedman. 1982. "Changing Attitudes toward Marriage and Single Life." *Family Planning Perspectives* 14(6):297-303.
- Thornton, Arland, William G. Axinn, and Daniel H. Hill. 1992. "Reciprocal Effects of Religiosity, Cohabitation, and Marriage." *The American Journal of Sociology* 98(3):628-51.
- Thornton, Arland, William G. Axinn, and Jay D. Teachman. 1995. "The Influence of School Enrollment and Accumulation on Cohabitation and Marriage in Early Adulthood." *American Sociological Review* 60(5):762-74.
- Tucker, M. Belinda and Claudia Mitchell-Kernan. 1990. "New Trends in Black American Interracial Marriage: The Social Structural Context." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52: 209-18.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2000-2003. "Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, 4-Year Average: 2000-2003." U.S. Census Bureau, Online. Available at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/fertility/slideshow/table01.xls>> accessed 26 September, 2007.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2001. "Marital Status and Living Arrangements." U.S. Census Bureau, Online. Available at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/pop-profile/msla.html>> accessed 26 September, 2007.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2005. "Earnings in the Past 12 Months (In 2005 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)." U.S. Census Bureau, Online. Available at <<http://factfinder.census.gov>> accessed 26 September, 2007.

Vera, Hernan, Donna H. Berardo, and Felix M. Berardo 1985. "Age Heterogamy in Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47:209-18.

Waite, Linda J. and Evelyn L. Lehrer. 2003. "The Benefits from Marriage and Religion in the United States: A Comparative Analysis." *Population and Development Review* 29(2):255-75.